2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957
NO6 Comanche NO6

rectly opposite—but a mile below the bluff was another gravelly beach, almost precisely similar to the one at which we had arrived, and opposite that, and below us, was likewise a high bluff, so that in crossing, it was necessary to move in a diagonal direction, as well as a long distance. The usual labor was expended, and the usual means resorted to in passing the drove, which, in consequence of the low water extending from the opposite beaches, left only the main channel, a distance, perhaps, of a hundred yards, to be swum. When it came our turn to take passage, the blindfolds were removed, and each was seated in a little buffalo-skin boat, an invention original, I believe, with the Comanche tribes, and capable of being taken apart, folded into a small compass, and carried as baggage. To the bow of these boats were hitched one end of a hair rope, the other to the tails of our mules, who safely ferried us from shore to shore.

That night we encamped at the foot of the mountain, and the whole of the next day traveled, as near as I could judge, over a steep, rough, and uneven road. During the entire trip, I was subjected to the same annoyances of being run under trees, burned with hot horseflesh, and staked down at night, as described above.

Early in the afternoon of the fourth day the warriors raised the war whoop, and afar off was heard another war whoop in reply. As we advanced, over what appeared to me a smooth plain, the answering voices grew more and more distinct, until finally the approaching parties met and intermingled. Having halted, I was taken from the mule, and when allowed the liberty of my eyes, found myself and companions standing together, in the midst of a great number of tents, and surrounded by five or six hundred men, all pushing forward to catch a glimpse of us.

The Chief and His Household

Modern improvements have not been carried so far among them as to furnish the convenience of bells, such as are used to call waiters in our fashionable hotels, but as a substitute mine host of the wigwam had tied a deerskin cord to the corner of each of his wive's buffalo mattresses, the other end extending under the canvas into his own tent, thus rendering only a slight twitch necessary to communicate intelligence their presence was required. It was their duty to attend him, come at his call and go at his bidding, standing towards him as much in the relation of slaves as of wives.

He was the civil chief as distinguished from the war chief, and consequently the head of the tribe. This dignity carried with it the privilege of possessing four wives, a common Indian being allowed to have but one, subordinate officers two, and the war chief three. His name was Osolo, which, translated into Anglo Saxon, signifies "the Big Wolf." He had eight children, four of whom still remained in their mothers' tents, two had grown to manhood and taken wives to themselves, while two daughters had likewise left the paternal wigwam for the matrimonial lodge.

I had an opportunity now of observing their manner of preparing and partaking breakfast, which certainly was not attended with an extraordinary ceremony or display. Outside the tent, in front of the door, two logs lay side by side. Between them the fire was kindled. A long slice of horseflesh was attached to the end of a stick, some four feet in length, by which the meat was held over the fire, and when barely warmed through was brought into the tent, the handle end of the stick thrust into the ground, the long slice dangling from the other end, resembling a drooping blood-red flag. Kiln-dried corn was next boiled and mashed and served in a large dish made of bark. Breakfast was then

2: Lee T-5 (1855-1858) 1957
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the buffalo-skin saddle, I sat down upon it and consulted with myself as to what it was best to do. My safety depended much upon circumstances. If the body of the chief should happen to be discovered immediately, my escape was doubtful. The moment it was found, my knowledge of savage life taught me, a party would instantly and eagerly start upon my trail, and at the same time messengers be sent to all the tribes far and near, calling on them to keep a sharp lookout for my approach, so that I had as much to apprehend in front as in the rear.

I was provided with the dead chief's rifle and ammunition, and consequently had the means of kindling a fire, but making the one or discharging the other, at least for some days, would be a dangerous experiment, inasmuch as the noise of the rifle or the light of the fire might expose me. The demands of appetite, however, would render it necessary to risk both, and, in fact, already were they becoming clamorous, having fasted since our early departure in the morning from the camp of the Wild Horse. Being impossible at that hour to capture game, my thoughts turned upon the mule. She had followed me unexpectedly and could be of no possible use; on the contrary, in all probability, would prove an annoyance. Necessity, which is, indeed, the mother of invention, suggested how I could turn her to account, and the suggestion was adopted. Walking up to the tired and patient beast, as unsuspicious of harm as was her now stark owner when he bent down to drink, I grasped the long knife that was wont to grace his girdle, and drew it across her throat.

When life was extinct, I cut from her hams long thin slips of flesh to the measure of some ten pounds, and having done so, resolved to run the venture of kindling a fire, trusting that the Rolling Thunder was still reposing undis-

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

Comanchería

Comanches and their Kiowa allies preferred to camp near a running stream in open timber. Along meandering creek valleys toward the headwaters of larger streams, where there were adequate canyons, arroyos, and breaks for protection, abundant grass for the large horse herds, ample buffalo and antelope for food, wood for the campfires, and sweet water for drinking, were to be found the Comanche villages. A large camp sometimes extended several miles along a stream or forest edge. A Comanche village which lay east of the Wichita Mountains in 1834 is reported to have extended along Cache Creek from Medicine Bluff north to Chandler Creek and southward to Wolf Creek, a distance of fifteen miles.[20]

Within the camp itself there appears to have been no required plan. If the terrain was favorable, the lodges might be grouped in a rough circular fashion about the lodge of the chief. In another village, the lodges might appear to follow a rectangular plan. There were usually as many groups of lodges as there were leaders, the lodges of the most important men being located nearest that of the leader.[21] There was no privacy in the camp, for neighbors entered and left a tipi at will. While busy wives performed their daily tasks of preparing food, tanning hides, and making tipis and clothes, the men spent their time discussing matters of general import, raiding, hunting, making weapons, or simply idling the hours away at sleep or play, and the children shouted at play or assisted their mothers with their work. In the evenings or on any unusual occasion, the whole camp gave vent to joy or sorrow, anger or enthusiasm, by positive, and at times noisy and colorful, demonstrations. Innumerable lanky, ferocious dogs greeted the approaching stranger by day or gave forth in unison to warn their masters of danger by night.

But what had been a noisy camp could become within a few minutes a lonely prairie with little evidence of previous habitation. On the day before the move, the camp crier rode through the camp making the announcement and describing the new location. The next morning the women were in a hurry to pack and be on their way, for those who were first might obtain choice sites in the new camp. One end

[20] W. S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill*, 7.

[21] T. A. ("Dot") Babb, *In the Bosom of the Comanches*, 106–107; Nelson Lee, *Three Years among the Camanches*, 127–28; George Catlin, *North American Indians*, II, 72; C. C. Rister, *Border Captives*, 16.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

VI

From Cradle to Grave

THE Comanche infant was born into a world of adults who welcomed and cherished it. It was not looked upon as a nuisance or handicap, but rather as a valuable addition to the tribe. Girls were accepted, but boys were preferred. Some families made a practice of painting a black spot on the door of the tipi if a newborn child was a boy, as a means of informing the people that the tribe had been strengthened by the addition of another "brave." Although the motherly affection that was the child's due was bestowed upon both male and female, boys received greater care than girls from their mothers and more indulgence from both parents all along the line.

There is conflicting opinion about twins. The woman who bore twin boys might be honored; other parents might regard twins as unnatural. Sometimes the parents attempted to destroy one or both of them, particularly if one or both were girls, but the more common practice was to give one away if foster parents could be found. For fear her husband might destroy both, the mother would sometimes dispose of one and not inform her husband that she had given birth to twins. In the eighteen eighties Dr. George Holley discovered and saved an infant, which was one of twins, buried in sand by its mother. There is at least one other recorded instance of such a rescue.[1]

Infanticide also seems to have been practiced in case the infant was born deformed, diseased, or a weakling. The attending women

[1] Annie M. Barnes, *Matouchon: A Story of Indian Child Life*, 11.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

622 more upon personal influence than upon delegated authority. In addition to the qualities of kindness, generosity, and wisdom in tribal affairs, physical fitness, a record for dash and daring, valor, and firmness, whether in camp or in battle, were also desirable characteristics of such leaders, but were not absolutely prerequisite to the attainment of office.

While it was not necessary for a man to have a war record to become a peace chief, it was not uncommon in later years for a war leader to achieve that rank. Certainly one who had attained leadership by personal bravery and exhibitions of courage and skill, either in the chase or on the field of battle, had added prestige. The peace chief was usually a man whose raiding days were over, although he might occasionally take to the warpath, designating someone to act in the capacity of civil chief during his absence.

When a man emerged as a civil chief, he had become a kind of revered patriarch. To all the band he was "father." The People were his "children." Although he wisely refrained at times from intervening in disputes, there were times when his judicious words brought satisfaction to both parties. Judge he was not, but mediator he seems to have been at times. It was in situations where the problem was a question of what ought to be done that the civil chief was important. That his advice was followed means no more than that his ideas appeared to be right and proper. He spoke the custom. Under no circumstances did a civil chief have the power to order an adjustment to be made. He had no power over the life of any member of the tribe. His influence was limited to internal and civil matters only. No peace chief had authority to prevent by force a war party from taking the trail. His only really definite power was that of deciding the time and place of camp moving.[4] The chief who proved tactless, cowardly, or inefficient would soon be supplanted; but the readjustment would take place gradually and by common consent rather than by formal procedure. Should the chief disgrace himself by an act of cowardice or maladministration, the band might quickly depose him and elevate another.

● [202] An important peace chief had his personal herald or camp crier, who served as the chief's mouthpiece in announcing the daily news and comments of the chief.

[4] Informants: Kills Something; That's It.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

Roberts' Rules of Order, but their procedure was on a very high level of parliamentary decorum.

Such a council was held in 1843 to decide the fate of the ambassadors sent by President Sam Houston of the Republic of Texas to invite the Comanches to discuss a treaty. Each speaker, as his turn came, delivered a vociferous oration, but was never interrupted. When all who were entitled to speak had finished, the head chief, whose turn it was, remained silent, and no one moved or spoke from noon until four o'clock. Either the chief was pondering the weighty matter or seeking by his silence to impress upon his audience the importance of the decision before the body. When he spoke, he gained such support that when the vote was taken the ambassadors were spared.[7]

The council considered such matters as moving the camp, undertaking a tribal war, making peace, seeking an alliance with other tribes for the purpose of proceeding to war against a common enemy, the selection of the time and place of the summer hunt, community religious services, the disposition of spoils belonging to the band (but not of spoils acquired by a raiding party), the allocation of supplies to widows and the needy, and the regulation of trade with outsiders.

When any important decision had been reached, it was announced by the camp crier, who, mounting his horse, heralded the news as he rode through the village. If by any chance the decision was not in accord with public feeling, the action was likely to be modified. In practice, however, this seldom happened, for public sentiment had been well ascertained before the council met. The older men were always slow to take any radical action.

Decisions of councils generally were regarded by the warriors as sacrosanct. Punishment for violating these decisions was certainly neither common nor necessary. The warriors obeyed more from fear of arousing the anger of their chiefs and the displeasure of the supernatural powers than because of any respect for authority in the abstract. The nomadic character of the Comanches, however, made it impossible for the chiefs to keep in touch with their warriors at all times, and when a warrior committed an offense, his punishment, so far as the chief and council were concerned, usually went no further

[7] M. M. Kenney, "Tribal Society among Texas Indians," *The Quarterly* of the Texas Historical Association, Vol. I (1897), 31.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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727 Captive white children were generally initiated into the tribe by a series of terrifying experiences in which the Indians tried their courage by brutal treatment and threats of destruction. They would sometimes be tied to a stake while their captors, with slashes and menacing gestures, punctuated by hideous yells, threatened to cut them to pieces, shoot them, or even burn them at the stake. Some of these unfortunate children never lived to recount their experiences. If the victim survived the initiation to the satisfaction of his captors, he became a slave and was compelled to do menial tasks, like Carrying Her Sunshade. If he proved his mettle according to Comanche standards, better days awaited him. He would likely be adopted as a member of a chief's or warrior's family. Later he was permitted to take part in raids and battles. If he proved a brave fighter, he might become an honored and respected warrior and rise to any position open to a natural-born Comanche. The captives, mostly Mexicans, who did not become warriors tended the horse herds and practiced such specialized industries as gun repairing and saddle-making. The captive woman who made a dutiful and faithful wife and the captive man who had won war honors were sometimes publicly honored.[17] Ordinarily the Comanches refused to surrender a captive without the payment of a reward. Some of the more responsible chiefs tried to stop the taking of white women and children as captives, and some went so far as to buy captives from other Comanches and liberate them. Some of the most hardened warriors are known to have wept because a captive of whom they had become fond returned to his own people.

574 All the accounts agree that a Comanche felt obligated to lodge, entertain, protect, and feed, even to his last morsel, any person, regardless of nationality, even though it might be his bitterest enemy, who happened to ask for lodging.

726 When a Comanche raiding or war party found itself hard pressed
● 202 by an enemy force too large to resist, or if it feared pursuit, it divided and subdivided its forces until each fleeing warrior left a separate trace and pursuers found it impossible to follow the trail. Scattered Comanches were adept in communicating with one another through means of signals. After a night raid when the warriors knew them-

[17] Linton, "The Comanche Sun Dance," *loc. cit.*, 421; Burnet, "American Aborigines, Indians of Texas," *loc. cit.*, Vol. I (May 22, 1824), 163.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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selves to be in close proximity, they communicated by imitating an owl or a coyote. Writing of one occasion when the members of a party had become separated during a night raid on the settlements, one of the raiders said, "When all was quiet we hooted like an owl for our missing companion; when he failed to answer, we knew he was dead."[18] They would build fires and surround them with blankets, forcing columns of smoke to ascend as signals. Different numbers of columns had various meanings. Mounds of stones were arranged to indicate routes followed and the time of the moon when they were arranged. When buffalo bones were available, they were certain to be used to convey messages to comrades. Herman Lehmann has left an interesting paragraph on signaling.

> We found buffalo bones and on them pictures representing a fight with the white people. On some bones properly arranged were the pictures of seven men pierced with arrows, also a wagon burning up; the bones pointed upward. Twelve bones peculiarly arranged represented twelve days journey. We traveled twelve days and saw smokes a long way apart in a row pointing westward which indicated that the Rangers had made it too hot for them and they had gone on west.[19]

The scattered warriors would seek some point where the chances were good that their trail would be discovered. Providing themselves with a thin piece of birch bark, which can be folded without breaking, they placed upon it the information which they wished their comrades to have, then striking a hatchet deep into the trunk of a tree and withdrawing it, they placed the bark in the incision, the outer part pointing in the direction they had taken.

After an expedition the Comanches normally had plenty of mounts, and they kept going night and day at a high rate of speed until they believed themselves out of danger of pursuers. On one occasion they kept going so long that one captive "began to think they had quit eating."[20] During a fast retreat, old, slow, and weak

[18] C. and J. D. Smith, *op. cit.*, 64.

[19] Lehmann, *op. cit.*, 119.

[20] C. and J. D. Smith, *op. cit.*, 35.

21: Burnet T 5 (1818-1819) 1951 NO6 Comanche... to Texas

[ca. 1818]

175 628 tion of country which custom seems to have appropriated to its more special use and occupancy.

621 622 175 These three great national parties, are subdivided into captaincies or villages, to each of which is appointed a chief, whose distinction seems to consist rather in name than authority. His name however, gives title to the flying village, and is useful in this respect, as some sign of discrimination is necessary, and they can derive none from locality. These 621 175 subdivisions are various and contingent, each member being at liberty to withdraw from one village and unite with another, as caprice or convenience may dictate.

175 221 As the Comanchees do not cultivate the ground, but derive their subsistence from the spontaneous productions of nature, and chiefly from the animal kingdom, they are necessarily migratory, and obliged to change their encampment every ten or fifteen days. [231] The scarcity of game, which is soon taught to avoid their dangerous neighborhood, and the speedy exhaustion of convenient pasturage, which is indispensable to the subsistence of their large herds of mules and horses, are the principal reasons for such frequent removals. 175 When about to abandon a position, they generally fire the grass, to give intelligence of their decampment to 202 absentees;—smoke is likewise employed as a telegraph to announce the return of a war party. It is not uncommon to see, at the same time, 8 or 10 of these signals darkening the horizon, and rearing their columns in gloomy grandeur, to the vertex of a serene and brilliant atmosphere.

175 643 The three parties collectively acknowledge one head or grand Chief, who is selected from either party. His appointment is indefinite as to duration and extent of authority, the latter depending more on the force of his personal character, than on the investments of office. 175 Indeed a positive official authority, is not recognized in their crude system [642] of government. They have but few traditionary laws, and [671] these, they are not always capable of enforcing. Compulsion is seldom exercised on a refractory culprit; and when [692] imperious circumstances require it to be done, it is effected by a convention of chiefs, whose personal influences become auxiliary to an otherwise impotent authority.

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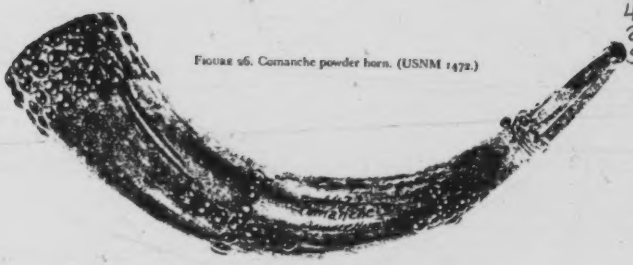

FIGURE 26. Comanche powder horn. (USNM 1472.)

FIGURE 27. Comanche war whistle. (USNM 5964.)

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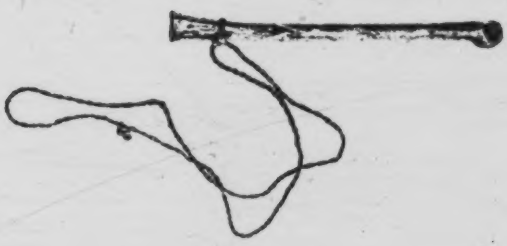

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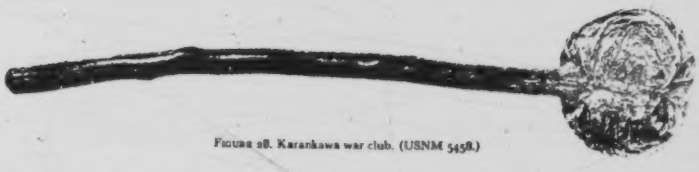

FIGURE 28. Karankawa war club. (USNM 5458.)

[p. 175]

34: Ewers E-4 (no date) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6
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profusely with brass tacks in four bands near the base end, and two crosses spaced at equal distances of the length of the horn.

Comanche War Whistle Figure 27

Berlandier mentions the Comanche war leader's use of a whistle to blow commands to his followers while in action against the enemy.[10] One of these whistles, collected by Berlandier, is pictured in Figure 27. It is made from the ulna of an eagle and is 19.5 cm. in length. Open at both ends and with a triangular finger stop cut in one side, the whistle is provided with a cord of twisted rawhide for suspension from the leader's neck. While among the Comanche in 1883, shortly after the intertribal wars ended, Ten Kate was told of the former use of an eagle bone whistle to sound signals in battle.[11] George Bird Grinnell describes the Cheyenne use of a bone war whistle.[12] This was not an instrument peculiar to the Comanche.

Karankawa War Club Figure 28

A war club of the Karankawa Indians of the Gulf Coast is made from a single piece of ironwood (Ostrya sp.). The burl forms a head 10 cm. in diameter, and the projecting branch provides a handle 36 cm. in length. Although this club weighs but one pound, ironwood is an exceptionally hard and strong material. This must have made an effective weapon in close combat. The Indian who made this weapon must have shown considerable ingenuity in recognizing the potentiality of this abnormal tree growth as a war club. It is improbable that ironwood burls were typical Karankawa weapons, because they were uncommon in nature.

This club was obtained by John Varden, proprietor of the Washington Museum in the District of Columbia, while he was in New Orleans on a collecting trip in 1838. He recorded the specimen as a "War club of the Cránka War Indians of Texas" from a "George W. Chambers." Although Berlandier did not collect this piece, it is contemporaneous with the specimens in his collection. It may be the only war club that has been preserved from the Karankawa, whom Berlandier met in 1829, less than three decades before that tribe became extinct.

Comanche Painted Rawhide Case Plate 18

Women were the painters of geometric designs on parfleches and other rawhide cases among the Plains Indians. A fine example of Comanche women's painting on rawhide appears in Plate 18. This case is made from a single piece of rawhide folded twice to form the front, back, and triangular top flap of the case. When folded the case is nearly square—26 cm. high by 28 cm. wide. The case is laced tightly together at the sides with long narrow strips of rawhide, which also provide decorative fringes, some as long as 48 cm. This form of case was well known among the Blackfoot and neighboring tribes of the Upper Missouri as early as the 1830s and was used to hold sacred objects. The painted designs in green, red, and black on the front of

10. Page 51.
11. Ten Kate, 1885, p. 7.
12. Grinnell, 1962, vol. 1, p. 204.

[See p. 180-E--Analyst.]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 178]